

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 NSCE-00
SSO-00 ICAE-00 INRE-00 OMB-01 TRSE-00 SAA-01
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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8886
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 BEIRUT 4212

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MARR, UN, LE, IS, PLO
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR LEONARD'S TRIP TO SOUTH LEBANON: BRIEFINGS
BY UNIFIL COMMANDER ERSKINE AND HIS STAFF

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. DURING VISIT OF UN DEPUTY PERMREP
JAMES LEONARD TO UNIFIL HEADQUARTERS IN NAQURAH ON
JULY 22, GENERAL EMMANUEL ERSKINE AND HIS STAFF SAID THE
FOLLOWING: CHRISTIAN MILITIAS RATHER THAN PALESTINIANS
POSED THE MAIN OPERATIONAL PROBLEM TO THE UNITED NATIONS
FORCES. UNIFIL HAD SUCCEEDED IN PREVENTING MAJOR COMBAT
IN SOUTH LEBANON, BUT HAD FAILED TO HELP THE GOL RESTORE
ITS SOVEREIGNTY IN THE AREA. THE GOL WOULD HAVE TO
SEND ARMY UNITS SOUTH TO ACCOMPLISH THIS. THE INITIAL
UNITS SHOULD ESTABLISH ONLY A SYMBOLIC PRESENCE, HOW-
EVER, AND SHOULD BE STATIONED BETWEEN THE QA'QAI'YAT BRIDGE
AND TIBNIN, WHERE THERE IS NO RISK OF CONFRONTATION WITH
ANYONE. THERE ARE ABOUT 150-180 ARMED PALESTINIANS WITHIN

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UNIFIL'S AREA OF OPERATIONS, AS WELL AS 4,000 CHRISTIAN
FIGHTERS WITHIN THE CHRISTIAN ENCLAVE. UNIFIL NEEDS PRE-FAB
HOUSING BEFORE THE RAINY SEASON BEGINS. END SUMMARY.

2. UN DEPUTY PERMREP JAMES LEONARD, VISITING DEPARTMENT
OFFICER NAT HOWELL, ARMA AND EMBOFF VISITED SOUTH LEBANON
JULY 22. THEY WENT BY HELICOPTER FROM BEIRUT TO UNIFIL

HEADQUARTERS AT NAQURAH, WHERE THEY WERE BRIEFED BY GENERAL EMMANUEL ERSKINE AND HIS STAFF. LEONARD, HOWELL AND EMBOFF THEN TOURED UNIFIL'S AREA OF OPERATIONS BY HELICOPTER. (ARMA REMAINED AT NAQURAH.) THE HEADQUARTERS BRIEFINGS ARE GIVEN BELOW. THE TOUR OF UNIFIL'S AREA OF OPERATIONS IS COVERED IN A SEPTTEL.

3. IN WELCOMING BRIEFING UNIFIL COMMANDER ERSKINE SAID THE FOLLOWING:

A. THE UNIFIL AREA OF OPERATIONS HAS BEEN GENERALLY CALM THIS MONTH, EXCEPT FOR THE CAPTURE OF UNIFIL SOLDIERS IN THE TYRE AREA ON JULY 12 AND IN IBL AS SAQI ON JULY 21 BY REJECTIONIST PALESTINIANS. (COMMENT. THERE WERE AT LEAST TWO SHOOTING INCIDENTS INVOLVING UNIFIL LATER ON JULY 22 AND ON JULY 23, HOWEVER, END COMMENT.)

B. FATAH UNDER YASIR ARAFAT HAS BEEN DOING ITS BEST TO RESPECT ITS PLEDGE TO COOPERATE WITH UNIFIL. THE CHRISTIAN MILITIAS POSED UNIFIL'S MAIN OPERATIONAL PROBLEM. MANY WERE "HOOLIGANS AND GANGSTERS, BUT WE HAVE TO LIVE WITH THEM."

C. CONTINUED PLO COOPERATION WAS CONTINGENT ON UNIFIL BEING ABLE TO ESTABLISH MORE POSITIONS IN THE CHRISTIAN ENCLAVE, BUT THIS WAS BEING STRONGLY RESISTED BY THE CHRISTIAN MILITIAS. UNIFIL NOW HAD 27 POSITIONS TOTALING ABOUT 300 MEN IN THE
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ENCLAVE: 17 POSITIONS WHICH HAD BEEN NEGOTIATED WITH THE CHRISTIANS, FIVE UNTSO POSITIONS AND FIVE POSITIONS TAKEN OVER FROM THE ISRAELIS.

D. UNIFIL WOULD CONTINUE TO SEEK TO AVOID MAJOR ARMED CONFRONTATION WITH ANY GROUP, SINCE THE CONTRIBUTING POWERS WOULD NOT ACCEPT MAJOR CASUALTIES. UNIFIL UNITS WOULD OPEN FIRE ONLY UNDER THREE CIRCUMSTANCES:

-- IN SELF-DEFENSE;

-- IN DEFENSE OF UNIFIL'S MANDATE (ERSKINE DID NOT SPECIFY CRITERIA FOR THIS);

-- IN REACTION TO OBSTRUCTION BY ARMED ELEMENTS OF UNIFIL'S FUNCTIONS.

3. UNIFIL HAD BEEN VERY SUCCESSFUL IN FULFILLING ONE MAJOR PART OF ITS MANDATE: THERE HAD BEEN NO MAJOR FIGHTING IN SOUTH LEBANON INVOLVING ISRAELIS, PALESTINIANS OR CHRISTIANS SINCE UNIFIL DEPLOYED THERE. MOREOVER, THE CLASHES IN BEIRUT THIS MONTH WOULD HAVE SPREAD TO SOUTH LEBANON, WERE IT NOT

FOR UNIFIL'S PRESENCE, AND NORMAL CIVILIAN LIFE HAD LARGELY RETURNED TO THE AREA. IN THIS CONNECTION, UNIFIL WAS SUCCESSFULLY PURSUING THE FOLLOWING OPERATIONAL MISSION:

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-- STOPPING ARMED PALESTINIANS FROM MOVING INTO UNIFIL'S AREA OF OPERATIONS. (ARMED FIGHTERS ARE TURNED BACK, BUT UNARMED PALESTINIANS IN CIVILIAN CLOTHES ARE ALLOWED TO ENTER, ERSKINE SAID.)

-- STOPPING THE PALESTINIANS ALREADY IN THE AREA FROM MOVING SOUTH TO CLASH WITH THE ISRAELIS OR CHRISTIAN MILITIAS, AND STOPPING THE CHRISTIAN MILITIAS FROM MOVING NORTH TO CLASH WITH THE PALESTINIANS.

-- CONTAINING ARMED FIGHTERS ALREADY IN UNIFIL'S AREA OF OPERATIONS TO THEIR PRESENT LOCATIONS.

-- HELPING REHABILITATE CIVILIAN FACILITIES.

D. UNIFIL HAD, HOWEVER, FAILED TO FULFILL AN IMPORTANT PART OF ITS MANDATE: IT HAD NOT HELPED THE GOL- RE-ESTABLISH ITS AUTHORITY IN THE AREA. FOR UNIFIL TO DO SO, THE GOL HAD
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TO DEPLOY SOME ARMY UNITS TO SOUTH LEBANON. (UNIFIL'S DEPUTY COMMANDER, JEAN CUQ, SAID LATER THAT THE INITIAL DEPLOYMENT SHOULD BE SYMBOLIC ONLY, SINCE THE LEBANESE ARMY WAS NOT UP TO UNDERTAKING ANY REAL SECURITY TASKS. HE PROPOSED THAT THE FIRST UNITS BE DEPLOYED BETWEEN THE QA'QA'IYAT BRIDGE AND TIBNIN, "WHERE THERE IS NO RISK OF CONFRONTATION WITH ANYONE.")

E. BOTH ISRAEL AND THE PARTIES IN BEIRUT EXERCISED INFLUENCE OVER THE MILITIAS. HADDAD WAS CLOSE TO CAMILLE CHAMOUN AND SHIDIAC TO BACHIR GEMAYEL. THE ISRAELIS EXERCISED THE MOST IMPORTANT INFLUENCE, HOWEVER, BECAUSE THEY WERE PRESENT ON THE GROUND. (ERSKINE'S BRIEFING MAP SHOWED 14 POINTS OF ENTRY BETWEEN ISRAEL AND LEBANON. CUQ, HOWEVER, BELIEVED THAT THE PARTIES IN BEIRUT EXERCISED "80 PERCENT" OF THE INFLUENCE OVER THE MILITIAS. ANOTHER UN OFFICIER, WHO NEGOTIATES FREQUENTLY WITH HADDAD, SAID THE LATTER HAD THE FOLLOWING LOYALTIES IN ORDER OF IMPORTANCE: (1) HADDAD, (2) HIS SUPPLY LINES THROUGH ISRAEL, AND (3) CAMILLE CHAMOUN. THE OFFICER ADDED THAT: (1) HADDAD WAS NOT LOYAL TO THE LEBANESE ARMY; AND (2) HE WAS BASICALLY A GOOD MAN WHO HAD GOTTEN HIMSELF "IN OVER HIS HEAD" IN A SITUATION SO COMPLICATED THAT HE COULD NOT NOW EXTRICATE HIMSELF.)

4. AFTER ERSKINE FINISHED TALKING, LEONARD PARTY WAS BRIEFED BY MEMBERS OF UNIFIL'S STAFF, WHO SAID THE FOLLOWING:

A. THERE ARE NOW 150-180 ARMED PALESTINIANS WITHIN UNIFIL'S AREA OF OPERATIONS. THIS FIGURE HAS BEEN CONSTANT FOR ABOUT THE LAST MONTH. (COMMENT: FIGURE 150-180 REPRESENTS NUMBER OF ARMED PALESTINIAN UNIFIL HAS DETECTED, NOT NECESSARILY TOTAL NUMBER. CUQ REMARKED THAT THERE ARE ALSO 2,000 PALESTINIANS IN THE TYRE POCKET, 60 PERCENT OF WHOM WERE ARMED. END COMMENT.)

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B. THERE ARE A TOTAL OF ABOUT 4,000 CHRISTIAN FIGHTERS IN SOUTH LEBANON, ABOUT 3,600 OF WHOM WERE MILITIA AND 400 SOLDIERS NOMINALLY MEMBERS OF THE LEBANESE ARMY. HADDAD IN THE NORTHEASTERN SECTOR CONTROLLED ABOUT 2750 MEN (2500 MILITIA AND 250 SOLDIERS). SHIDIAC IN THE WESTERN SECTOR ABOUT 1650 MEN (1500 MILITIAMEN AND 150 SOLDIERS). THE CHRISTIAN FIGHTERS ALSO HAD TWENTY TANKS, NINE 155 MILLIMETER HOWITZERS AND TWENTY ARMORED PERSONNEL CARRIERS. (COMMENT: THE NUMBER OF CHRISTIAN FIGHTERS IS AT BEST AN ESTIMATE. AS WITH PALESTINIANS, THE NUMBER OF WEAPONS PROBABLY REPRESENTS

WHAT UNIFIL HAS COUNTED, NOT NECESSARILY THE TOTAL NUMBER.
END COMMENT.)

C. THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT IS ALMOST TOTALLY ABSENT IN SOUTH
LEBANON, ALTHOUGH THERE ARE ABOUT 100 GENDARMES IN UNIFIL'S
AREAS OF OPERATIONS. (CUQ SAID THAT THE GENDARMES WERE
ABSOLUTELY WORTHLESS.)

5. AFTER THE BRIEFINGS, LEONARD PARTY MADE A TOUR OF UNIFIL'S
COMPOUND. MOST NOTEWORTHY SIGHT WAS ARMED CHRISTIAN MILITIA
MANNING CHECKPOINT AT ENTRANCE TO VILLAGE OF NAQURAH JUST
OUTSIDE COMPOUND.

6. MOST OF THE UNIFIL SOLDIERS ARE LIVING IN TENTS, AND
OFFICERS ACCOMPANYING US, AS HAD ERSKINE, STRESSED THAT PRE-
FAB HOUSING IS NEEDED BEFORE BEGINNING OF RAINY SEASON.
COMMENT. EMBASSY ENDORSES NEED FOR SUCH HOUSING AND HOPES
NECESSARY EFFORTS WILL BE MADE TO OBTAIN IT. END COMMENT.
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